7: Gulick E-5 (1952) 1955 ME1 Lebanon ME1
Middle East M1

are being steadily removed in most Middle East countries at the present time) do not obtrude very much into everyday *living* in the average household, though they may do so somewhat more among the Muslims than among the Christians. Furthermore, he believes that that bugaboo of American feminists, the female chattel, has been unusual in any culture at any time except under special, hence conspicuous, circumstances. The occurrence of such circumstances can be safely predicted only in individual families in a patrilineal system, which are so well off that the woman can be relieved of all useful functions except sex. It is only in such families that extensive polygyny (if the culture permits it) is ordinarily to be found, and certainly an unfavored wife in a wealthy polygynous household can even be deprived of the dignity of her sexual role.

In the Middle East village, however, the basic unit of everyday living is the single household. Among the Christians, it is always based on a permanent monogamous marriage, and the probability is that the same is true among the great majority of the Muslims. The very existence of the household, initially and as time goes on, depends upon the active participation of the wife. She is cook, laundress, seamstress, nurse, and, above all, mother of the children who, it is hoped, will project the honor of the family into the future. She is *sitt al-bayt*, "mistress of the house," a title which, in Munṣif, used to be given to quite a number of baby girls as their personal name. Such a woman is no chattel, and there are numerous women in the village who, as individuals, are accorded unqualified respect by all.

The average village-dwelling woman works hard and makes no pretense of "hiding her age." She will continue to work hard until decrepitude overtakes her. One occasionally may even see an old woman trudging along bent nearly double under the weight of a bundle of firewood sometimes nearly as large as herself. But if this woman is socially oppressed, it is the incessant physical labor enjoined by necessity which is the tyrant and not the hard-heartedness of her husband, her brothers, or her sons, who are as hardworking and work-worn as she is.

As has been noted, the great majority of the Munṣif women are housewives or apprentice housewives. Domestic duties occupy most of their time, but, as will be seen in the next chapter, their regular chores do not prohibit social interaction outside the house. Before the introduction of convenient and relatively inexpensive Western manufactures, the average housewife wove the cloth with which she made her family's clothes. Weaving, like shoemaking, has now completely disappeared from the village which is not exceptional in this respect (cf. Kohn, 1936, p. 269). A few housewives do ornamental needlework to supplement the family income (cf. Fisher, 1950, pp. 208–09). The forty-four village women who have non-domestic paying jobs certainly represent something entirely new in the village culture. But the jobs themselves are something entirely new, and the writer is unable to say whether or not the women's taking them is in general motivated primarily by necessity rather than by "career girl" ambitions. His impression is that most of the girls feel that their jobs are temporary arrangements before mar-